

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 03867 180942 Z

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ADP-00 CU-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 3867

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TAGS: PFOR, KS, UR

SUBJECT: REPORTED SOVIET GESTURES TOWARD ROK

REF: A. SEOUL 3352 B. SEOUL 3384

SUMMARY: NEWS OF VISIT OF TWO ROK BUSINESSMEN TO
LENINGRAD HAS BROKEN AMIDST PRESS REPORTS FROM TOKYO
THAT SOVIETS WILL REPATRIATE SAKHALIN KOREANS. TWO
STORIES HAVE FUELED PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT ROK- SOVIET
RELATIONS. WHILE MIDLY ENCOURAGED, MOFA IS CAUTIOUS IN
ITS ASSESSMENT OF MEANING OF THESE REPORTED
DEVELOPMENTS.

1. ROK PRESS IN PAST FEW DAYS HAS GIVEN MAJOR
COVERAGE TO TWO SUCCESSIVE STORIES CONCERNING REPORTED
SOVIET GESTURES TO THE ROK. PAPERS ON JUNE 16 AND 17
CARRIED REPORT FROM TOKYO THAT RUSSIANS HAVE TOLD
JAPANESE RED CROSS THEY ARE READY TO REPATRIATE KOREAN
NATIONALS LIVING ON SAKHALIN. EVEN AS EDITORIALS WERE
WELCOMING THE REPORTED SOVIET GESTURE RE SAKHALIN KOREANS
THE KOREAN PRESS HAD A NEW HEADLINE STORY IN THE
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 03867 180942 Z

TOURIST VISIT TO LENINGRAD OF TWO KOREAN BUSINESSMEN WHO

HAD BEEN ATTENDING THE STANFORD RESEARCH INSTITUTE CONFERENCE IN HELSINKI. THEY WERE INTERVIEWED BY TELEPHONE JUNE 18 ON THEIR RETURN TO HELSINKI, AND THE PRESS HAS REPORTED THEIR TRIP FULLY, CALLING IT THE SOVIET'S WAY OF GIVING THE " GREEN LIGHT" TO THE ROK.

2. PRESS QUOTED BOTH KOREAN NATIONAL RED CROSS AND MOFA AS RESPONDING FAVORABLY TO PRESS REPORTS RE REPATRIATION OF KOREANS ON SAKHALIN, WHILE UNABLE SO FAR TO CONFIRM TOKYO STORY. BOTH KNRC AND MOFA WORKING LEVEL OFFICERS TOLD THE EMBASSY THEY HAD NO DIRECT INFORMATION ON THE STORY.

3. CHIEF OF MOFA DIVISION RESPONSIBLE FOR USSR AND EAST EUROPEAN AFFAIRS CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF JUNE 18 THAT ROKG HAD GRANTED PERMISSION TO THE TWO BUSINESSMEN TO MAKE THE TRIP TO LNINGRAD. TRIP WAS ARRANGED BY STANFORD RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND MOFA HAD NO OBJECTION TO INCLUSION OF THE BUSINESSMEN, BOTH OF WHOM ARE PROMINENT HEADS OF LARGE KOREAN FIRMS. ACCORDING TO PRESS, SOVIETS GRANTED THEM PERMITS, NOT VISAS STAMPED IN THEIR PASSPORTS.

4. COMMENT. WHILE MIDLY ENCOURAGED, MOFA IS CAUTIOUS IN ASSESSING THESE DEVELOPMENTS. BUSINESSMEN'S VISIT FOLLOWS CLOSELY THAT OF ROK DRAMATIST IN MAY (REFTEL B), HOWEVER MOFA POINTS OUT THAT VISAS HAVE NOT YET BEEN GRANTED FOR ROK PARTICIPATION IN THE UNIVERSIAD GAMES (REFTEL A), WHICH IT VIEWS AS FAR MORE SIGNIFICANT INDICATION OF SOVIET INTENTIONS RE IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH ROK.
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